



Seattle Fire Department

301 2nd Avenue South Seattle, WA 98104
www.seattle.gov/fire

After The Fire



Information for Recovering From a Fire

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The Seattle Fire Department provides this booklet as part of our continued commitment to your safety. The information contained in these pages will assist you in your household's recovery and restoring property damage by fire.

*Gregory M. Dean
Seattle Fire Chief*

Introduction

Why are there holes in my roof?

Why are the windows and doors broken?

Fires produce temperatures of over 1,200 degrees, along with smoke and hot toxic gases. At times, it is necessary to reduce the heat, smoke and hot gases before firefighters can enter a building to put out the fire and rescue any occupants.

Venting the smoke and gases must be done quickly to speed the rescue effort, as well as to prevent additional fire spread. Cutting holes in the roof helps with this task.

Often, walls must be forcibly opened to find "hidden" fires. The fire is not out until every "hot spot" is found

After the fire is out, damage from fighting the fire may appear unnecessary. However, without the use of these fire fighting and rescue techniques, lives could be lost and the building could suffer total destruction by fire.

Protect Yourself

Use Caution

We know you are anxious to inspect the damage and, if possible, begin to recover your belongings. Please be aware that there may be unseen hazards present.

Damage

The building may have suffered structural damage and be physically unsafe to enter. Gas, electrical or plumbing may not be working.

Toxins

Smoke and sooty deposits may be present. Toxins may include gases produced in the fire, as well as particles such as asbestos fibers used in some building materials. Exposure to some of these toxins has been shown to increase the risk of developing certain types of cancer.

Protect Yourself Continued

Airborne Contaminants

Some individuals may be especially sensitive to contaminants or sooty deposits which may be present after a fire. These include babies, small children, older persons, pregnant women and individuals with respiratory disease.

In most cases, it is safer and quicker to have your insurance agency handle the necessary clean up and renovation of your property. The agency can arrange repairs by skilled professionals who specialize in fire and water damage repairs. These individuals are aware of the possible hazards present and have the equipment to deal with them.

Protect Your Property

What You Need to Know

After the Fire Department personnel leave, the building becomes your responsibility. If possible, the firefighters will secure doors and windows. The final responsibility does however, lie with the owner.

Remove Your Valuables

If it is safe to enter the building, remove all valuables. It is your responsibility to protect against further damage due to weather, theft or vandalism.

Contact Your Insurance Agent

Do this as soon as possible. He or she must be notified of the fire and will be able to help you arrange for immediate repairs. If you cannot reach your agent or have no insurance, you may wish to obtain professional assistance for cleaning. Fire and water damage restoration firms are listed in the yellow pages.

Contact Your Manager

If you are a tenant, contact the resident manager, the owner or the owner's insurance agent. It is the owner's responsibility to prevent further loss to the building.

If Your Home is Uninhabitable

Use caution in re-occupying your home. If it has been severely damaged or contaminated, you may need to find other housing. If you are covered by a homeowner's insurance policy, you may be eligible for temporary housing. Remember, save any receipts for money you spend related to your fire loss. Your insurance company will want copies in order to reimburse you. These receipts will also be useful for verifying losses claimed on your federal income tax.

Individuals who have experienced a fire or other disaster may obtain assistance from the local American Red Cross. Upon application to the Red Cross, you can obtain food, clothing, lodging and other services. Day or night call 206-323-2345 and ask for Disaster Services. In addition to the Red Cross, there are other community agencies which may be able to help. Your Red Cross disaster caseworker can assist you in contacting appropriate agencies.

If Your Home is Uninhabitable Continued

Be sure to notify the following:

- ☐ The Post Office of your new address
- ☐ Bank(s)
- ☐ Credit card companies
- ☐ City Light or Seattle Public Utilities (water & garbage) 206-684-3000
- ☐ Other utilities as appropriate
Puget Sound Energy - 1-800-225-5773
- ☐ Social Security Administration, if necessary
- ☐ Your children's schools
- ☐ The Police Department if your home will be left vacant for any length of time
Precincts:
 - North: 206-684-0850
 - South: 206-386-1850
 - West: 206-684-8917
 - East: 206-684-4300

Construction

If the building is structurally damaged to the point that it is not habitable, a building inspector must be called. After the building inspection, a permit must be obtained prior to making repairs. Building Inspection: 206-684-8900

Utilities

The fire Department may have the utility services shut off or disconnected as a safety precaution and also to prevent further damage to the structure and its contents. The procedures for re-establishing utility service are as follows:

Electricity. An electrical inspector must check wiring to be sure it is safe to reconnect power. Contact Seattle City Light for an inspection at 206-684-3200. Remember, do not operate wet or damp appliances. Have a service person check them first. Electricity and water do not mix!

Water. Seattle Public Utilities service crews are available to restore your service at any time. The 24-hour service number is 206-386-1800. Water service inspection may be requested by calling 206-684-3000 during normal business hours.

Natural Gas. DO NOT turn the gas back on. A Puget Sound Energy service person is available 24-hours a day to turn on the gas and re-light appliances for you. Just call 1-888-225-5773

Telephone. Contact your telephone company's business office.

Care of Books & Documents

Documents

Below is a list of documents that should be located, if possible, to speed up the process of recovering from a disaster. NOTE: It is wise to store all important documents in a fireproof container or cabinet.

- ☐ Birth Certificate
- ☐ Driver's License
- ☐ Bank Books
- ☐ Insurance Policies
- ☐ Military Discharge Papers
- ☐ Passports
- ☐ Social Security Cards
- ☐ Marriage Papers
- ☐ Divorce Decree
- ☐ Credit Cards
- ☐ Title to Deeds
- ☐ Stocks & Bonds
- ☐ Senior Citizen ID Card
- ☐ Wills
- ☐ Medical Records
- ☐ Payment Books
- ☐ Warranties
- ☐ Income Tax Records
- ☐ Automobile Registration
- ☐ Citizenship Papers
- ☐ Burial Contracts
- ☐ Pet Licenses
- ☐ Death Certificates
- ☐ DSHS ID Card *

* Public assistance clients should notify the DSHS office in their area if their I.D. card is damaged or destroyed. Check the phone book for the office nearest you.

Care of Books & Documents Continued

To Reclaim Paper Money and Coins

Check with any local commercial bank or contact:

Paper Money

Currency Redemption Division
Treasury Department
Washington, D.C. 20220

Coins

Superintendent, U.S. Assay Office
32 Old Slip
New York, NY 10005

U.S. Savings Bonds

Call 1-800-333-2919 to request a Form DD 1048. Include name(s) and address(es) on bonds, approximate date of purchase, denomination and number of bonds.

Books

Place books on end, separate pages and air dry. You can also try placing unmarked dry paper between the pages and pressing to prevent crinkling and distorting. If very wet, air dry until damp, sprinkle cornstarch between pages, allow starch to consume moisture, then wipe with a dry cloth and press.

Documents

Sharp-freeze immediately. When desired copies are needed, simply allow to thaw, lift off each page as it thaws and copy. Contact any of the meat-cutting firms located in the yellow pages of your phone book for sharp (quick) freeze service.

Food Cleaning Tips

Food, Medicines, Cosmetics

Medicines, cosmetics and most foods exposed to heat or smoke should be thrown away.

Canned Food

Throw away any home-canned products or cans with bulges or dents. Undamaged commercially canned food may be disinfected before opening by washing with detergent. Rinse in cool, clean water. Disinfect by immersing in a solution of two tablespoons of household bleach per one gallon of water. Use a black permanent marker to re-label each can.

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Cleaning Tips

Mildew

Many people are allergic to molds and mildew. Public Health Seattle-King County recommends that all mattresses, upholstered articles and carpet pads be thrown out if they have been soaked. They cannot be dried fast or well enough to keep mildew and mold spores from growing. If you do keep any of these items, follow the directions below:

Upholstered Items & Mattresses

- Remove loose mold from surfaces by brushing with a broom. Do this outdoors to prevent scattering mildew spores in the house.
- Vacuum the surface to draw out more of the mold.
- Thoroughly dry by using an electric heater or fan to carry away moist air.
- If mildew remains, sponge lightly with thick detergent suds using only the foam; wipe with a clean, damp cloth. If molds have grown into the inner part of an item, send to a reliable dry cleaner.

Clothing

Clothing that can withstand bleaching should be cleaned by washing in a mixture of 1/2 cup of ammonia to two gallons of water. Rinse in vinegar. (Use rubber gloves). Rinse with clear water and dry thoroughly.

Always read the CARE LABEL for proper instructions before cleaning any garments. Additional information may be obtained from a commercial cleaning service.

Dishes

Wash all china, glass, pots and pans in hot, soapy water, using a scrub brush to remove any debris. Rinse in clear, clean water and dip in a solution of two tablespoons of ordinary household bleach to one gallon of water. Dishes with deep cracks must be thrown away.

Plastic and Wood Items

Plastic cookware, utensils, dishware, baby bottles and nipples, containers, cups and wooden utensils and bowls cannot be disinfected after exposure to contaminated water or chemicals. Do not use them for food or edible products.

Leather

Wipe with a damp cloth, then with a dry cloth. Stuff your purses, shoes, etc., with paper to retain shape. Leave suitcases open for airing. Steel wool or a suede brush can be used on suede. Contact leather and suede cleaners for expert information. See yellow pages under "Leather".

Cleaning Tips Continued

Walls

Walls may be washed while still wet. Use a mild soap or detergent. Wash a small area at a time, working from the floor up. Rinse in clear water immediately. Ceilings should be washed last. ***Do not paint until thoroughly dry.*** Contact a paint dealer for further information.

Washable Wallpaper

- Heat and ventilate room for several days to dry both plaster and paper.
- Wipe mildewed paper with soap and a wrung-out cloth. Rinse with clear water.
- Re-paste edges or loosened sections.
- Work quickly so paper does not become soaked. Work from bottom to top to prevent streaking.

Caution: Keep all cleaning cloths saturated with cleaning solutions (other than water) in a metal container equipped with a tight fitting metal cover.

Linoleum/Vinyl Floors

If water is allowed to remain underneath linoleum, odors and breakdown of wood begins. To remove or lift flooring, it is recommended that you contact a flooring specialist.

Removing White Spots on Wood Furniture

Wipe dry at once and polish with wax or furniture polish. For more cleaning tips, contact the Seattle Public Library at 206-386-4645.

Combating Odors

It is generally a very complex problem due to the varied materials on the market today which are manufactured by combining natural and man-made fibers. For best results, contact a professional cleaning service.

Wall to Wall Carpet

See "Mildew" section for warnings about soaked carpeting.

If carpeting is soaked, experts recommend replacing the padding underneath. A wet/dry vacuum or water extractor carpet cleaner can be rented at most supermarkets. Use it to remove standing water and dirt from carpets that are damp, but not soaked. Then add carpet cleaning detergent and clean the carpet as instructed. Rinse with vinegar and water in the tank of the machine. For further information, contact a commercial cleaning service.

Rugs

Let rugs and carpets dry thoroughly. Shampoo with a commercial rug shampoo. Dry the rugs as quickly as possible by laying them flat and exposing them to warm, dry air. Make sure rugs are thoroughly dry.

Cleaning Tips Continued

Refrigerators and Freezers

Sometimes odors are difficult to remove due to damp insulation which absorbs odor. Here are some cleaning recommendations:

- Defrost and wash all surfaces with water and dishwasher detergent, rinse with two tablespoons baking soda per quart of water, re-rinse with clear water.
- Alternatively, wash with solution of one cup vinegar to one gallon water or with solution of one cup household ammonia to one gallon water.

Caution: When cleaning or removing any refrigerator or freezer, be sure doors are removed or secured against closing on children!

Tax Tips

Property & Income Tax Adjustments

Property which is extensively damaged by fire may qualify for a reevaluation and reduction in your property tax assessment. Information and applications are available from the King County Assessor's Office, 206-296-5151.

Applications must be submitted within 75 days after the date of the destruction or within the year in which the destruction occurs. File your application before rebuilding or repairing property. Copies of the fire reports, insurance reports, contractor repair estimates and a photo should accompany your application.

Ask for Taxpayer's Claim for Reduction of Assessments on DESTROYED PROPERTY. Fill it out and return the form to the Assessor's office.

Uninsured Property

Uninsured loss of property, both real and personal, may entitle you to deductions in your income tax. Information is available from the local Internal Revenue Service office, 1-800-829-1040. The Seattle office is located at 915 2nd Avenue.

Resources

Seattle Fire Department	Emergency.....911 Business.....206-386-1400
American Red Cross (Emergency shelter, clothing and food)	Disaster Services.....206-323-2345
Utilities Seattle Public Utilities (water and garbage) Seattle City Light (electricity)	Business.....684-3000 Water Emergency.....206-386-1800 Natural Gas.....1-888-225-5773
Structural Department of Planning & Development (DPD)206-684-8950
Seattle Police Department	Emergency.....911 Business.....206-625-5011
Citizen's Service Bureau206-684-CITY
Low Interest Loans Available for low to moderate income Seattle homeowners in certain circumstances for the purpose of repairs, rebuilding, rehabilitation or weatherization.206-684-0244
Seattle Public Library (cleaning tips)206-386-4645
Social Security Administration1-800-772-1213
Property and Income Tax (King County Assessor)	Destroyed Property.....206-296-5151 Personal Property.....206-296-5185
Internal Revenue Service Ask for a copy of Publication 547: Tax Information on Disasters, Casualty Losses and Thefts1-800-829-1040

This pamphlet courtesy of

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